



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Voyageurs National Park

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Voyageurs National Park News Release

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For Immediate Release

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VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK AIMS TO PROTECT INTERIOR LAKES FROM SPINY WATERFLEAS

Now is the time to act to protect all of the park's interior lakes from the latest exotic species to infest the park's large lakes – spiny waterfleas. These tiny (1/4- 5/8”) crustacean zooplankton are native to Eurasia and were introduced into the Great Lakes from the ballast water of ships. They threaten the park's aquatic ecosystems and fishing by competing with native fish for food and fouling fishing gear.

Research has shown that the spiny waterflea can cause the following impacts:

- change the community composition of zooplankton
- competes directly with juvenile yellow perch and other small fish and minnows for food which could lead to a decrease in the abundance of these fish

The above impacts could alter the food web; for instance, yellow perch are an important part of the diet of walleye, so a decrease in yellow perch abundance could hurt walleye growth.

Spiny waterfleas are spread when either live adult waterfleas or viable resting eggs are transferred to a new body of water. Spiny waterfleas can be transported on bait buckets, anchor ropes, fishing line, boats, waders, and nets. The bottom line is that any gear that enters infested water and is transferred to another lake or river without being thoroughly dried (12- 48 hours) or washed with hot water (>140° F) can transfer spiny waterfleas.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has designated Rainy Lake, Rainy River, Namakan Lake, and Lake of the Woods as infested waters. The DNR has confirmed the presence of spiny waterflea in Crane Lake too. The DNR and park expect to find the spiny waterflea in Kabetogama and Sand Point Lake since these waters are connected to infested waters. The designation of these park lakes as infested will likely follow. The infested waters designation triggers specific Invasive Species Laws that are listed on page 68 of the DNR's 2007 Fishing Regulations handbook.

The National Park Service and DNR are working in concert to develop an extensive monitoring program and to develop best management practices to prevent the spread of the spiny waterflea and other exotic species. For example, the park immediately stopped all use of the floatplane for monitoring efforts on the interior lakes, and crews carefully dried equipment or used a separate set of research gear on the interior lakes when the spiny waterflea was discovered in Rainy Lake.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

The National Park Service intends to protect the interior lakes from the spiny waterflea and wants to hear from the public about proposed actions. Park management is considering the following three short- term measures for protecting the park's interior lakes:

- artificial bait only (on all interior lakes only)
- no personal boats allowed in interior lakes (the park will continue to provide canoes and row boats for rent through the Boats on Interior Lakes program and Commercial Use Authorizations on Mukooda Lake)
- no float plane landings on interior lakes

Park staff will also:

- monitor and research the invasion to determine the extent of its spread and to understand the impacts on aquatic systems
- educate the public about exotics to increase awareness
- implement Best Management Practices for staff, park partners and others, to limit the potential for spread to uninfested waters

The park seeks input from the public about the proposed measures for protecting the interior lakes. The park will accept public comments from March 29, 2007 through April 30, 2007. Please submit your comments on the park's project website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/voya> or mail them to Voyageurs National Park, 3131 Highway 53, International Falls, MN 56649. Copies of the complete proposal can be viewed at the park web page, www.nps.gov/voya or at park headquarters after March 29.

The park will conduct a program about the spiny waterflea and the park's proposal for any interested party or organization. To schedule a program call Kathleen Przybylski at 218- 283- 9821 or Kathleen_Przybylski@nps.gov.

The spiny waterflea is just one example of an aquatic invasive species. With your help and careful actions together we can try to prevent the spread of the spiny waterflea and other invasive species.

Stop aquatic hitchhikers!

- NPS-